

## Diploma in the Philosophy of Medicine – Sample Questions

The following questions are provided as illustrative examples of the types of questions that may be posed in Papers 1 and 2.

### Paper 1

#### Question

The following is a list of terms descriptive of an approach to justice and resource allocation, lettered A to I.

Match the letter for the ONE BEST relevant term to the number of the relevant case description. (8 marks)

Each item may be used once, more than once or not at all.

Relevant terms:

- A. Aristotelian justice
- B. The Hippocratic Oath
- C. Utilitarianism
- D. Libertarianism
- E. Marxism
- F. Commissioning
- G. Communism
- H. Rawls' theory of justice
- I. Quality Adjusted Life-Years (QALYs)
- J. Disability Adjusted Life-Years (DALYs)

Case descriptions:

1. Treat equals equally and un-equals unequally according to morally relevant inequalities. Consistent with a society that safeguards its citizens' lives and property – but which regards a tax-funded healthcare system as a form of theft.
2. Take from each according to ability and give to each according to need.
3. A rational person who makes a decision behind a veil of ignorance (without knowing who will benefit) will look after the least well-off.
4. Act to maximise welfare for the greatest number (at the least cost).
5. Would best accord with giving patients individual healthcare budgets that they choose to spend in the way they best see fit to, but once budgets have been spent the patients will not receive any more.
6. Arguably discriminates against the old or unhealthy by assigning less economic value to them.
7. Enjoins members of the group to teach their teachers' children free of charge.

#### Question

- a.
  - i. List Beauchamp and Childress' FOUR principles of biomedical ethics with a one or two sentence explanation of each principle. (8 marks)
  - ii. What does the term 'prima facie' mean in relation to the four principles? (1 mark)
- b. Describe the concept and problems of 'scope' in Principlism, including an example of how the concept could be applied. (2 marks)

## Paper 2

### Question

In relation to the case below:

- a. Briefly describe **five** of the most significant different moral issues that you detect;  
(20% of the marks for this question)
- b. Discuss **two** of these issues, with proper regard to the moral arguments and the moral counter-arguments involved.  
(60% of the marks for this question.)
- c. With regard to the **two** issues you discussed in greater depth, do you agree or disagree with the actions of the clinicians in this case?  
Explain your view.  
(10% of the marks for this question.)
- d. Are there any ways that you could improve upon the actions of ANY of the clinicians in this case?  
(10% of the marks for this question.)

### Case:

An expensively-dressed and articulate man (he lists his occupation as 'banker') in his late-thirties attends the emergency department (ED) complaining of feeling breathless. He is initially approached by a medical student in the department. The medical student offers to do an initial history and examination, but the patient refuses and asks to be seen by a consultant. He agrees to see one of the training-grade qualified doctors in the department.

He is already under the care of a private respiratory specialist and being treated with medication for a dry cough and weight loss. However, he declines to offer the ED team any more information. Based on clinical findings and his symptoms a Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) test is suggested. He refuses the test and refuses to discuss his reasons for refusing. He divulges at this point that the test had been recommended some months ago by his specialist, and he had refused it then. He lists his wife as next of kin and tells the doctors that he has two children, both in their early teens. He states that all his wife knows is that he has a chest infection, and he would like "to keep things that way".

He steadily deteriorates, becomes confused and unconscious. He is intubated, and transferred to the intensive care unit. In the ITU an HIV test is done which is positive. Further testing confirms he has a Pneumocystis pneumonia –an illness that is usually a consequence of HIV infection. He dies within 48 hours. The ITU team are asked to issue a death certificate for the patient's widow.

For reference: HIV is a virus that may be transmitted via sexual contact. There are treatments for the disease but no cure as yet. HIV can be asymptomatic but infectious for a long period of time. There is stigma associated with the disease and there is a higher prevalence in men who have sex with men, sex-workers, people from certain emerging countries and intravenous drug users.

### Question

How does the contemporary use of the quality adjusted life-year (QALY) in healthcare compare with Bentham's utilitarianism?